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## Viewing cable 04NASSAU733, BAHAMIAN PERSPECTIVE ON CARICOM AND HAITI

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### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

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If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#04NASSAU733**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">04NASSAU733</a>	<a href="#">2004-04-06 15:13</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Nassau</a>

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.haiti-liberte.com/archives/volume5-1/Campagne%20des%20E.U..asp>  
<http://www.haiti-liberte.com/archives/volume5-2/WikiLeaked%20Cables%20Reveal%20Obsessive.asp>  
<http://www.haiti-liberte.com/archives/volume5-2/Campagne%20des%20E.U..asp>

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NASSAU 000733

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/06/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHSA](#) [HA](#) [BF](#) [CARICOM](#)

SUBJECT: BAHAMIAN PERSPECTIVE ON CARICOM AND HAITI

REF: SECSTATE 71329

Classified By: Charge Robert M. Witajewski for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

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1. (C) Charge hosted a lunch for the Bahamian Foreign Minister Fred Mitchell, and Foreign Ministry Permanent Secretary, Ms. Patricia Rodgers on March 29. A/DCM and Consular Section Head also participated. The discussion covered a number of topics: The dynamics of recently-completed Caricom heads of government inter-sessional meeting, Caricom-U.S. relations, status of Bahamian ratification of the bilateral Comprehensive Maritime Agreement (CMA), the status of ex-Haitian President Jean Bertrand Aristide, and Caricom,s request of UN investigation of the events related to Aristide,s resignation and departure from Haiti.  
End of Summary

CARICOM INTER-SESSIONAL MEETING IN ST. KITTS

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2. (C) The Charge began the discussion by asking Foreign Minister Mitchell "How did the meeting go in St. Kitts?" Mitchell responded that Caricom,s statement reflected the aggregate view of Caricom members, however he continued, the Bahamas maintains its own views on these matters. Mitchell revealed a bit of internal Caricom dynamics in his response. According to FM Mitchell, there was a definite "north-south" division within Caricom on Haiti. In contrast to the more categorical positions taken by Grenada, Guyana, Surinam, and

Trinidad and Tobago, he claimed, the "northern Caribbean countries" who have more concrete interests took more "considered" positions regarding Haiti because of their geographic proximity. The northern Caribbean countries, he continued, are obliged to deal with the realities and are also cognizant of the importance of their relations with the United States and thus are more careful in balancing their interests with Caricom and the U.S. The southern Caribbean members are more detached from the practical issues and are guided by political agendas, according to the Bahamian Foreign Minister.

13. (C) Continuing on the Haiti theme, Foreign Minister Mitchell expressed the view that the United States overreacted to Jamaica's offer to let ex-President Aristide reside in the country and to Caricom's declarations. He appeared to be arguing that Caricom was entitled to express its views and not necessarily be held accountable for them. Mitchell also claimed that despite Caricom's verbal shots at the United States over recent events in Haiti, there would be little net impact on overall U.S.-Caricom relations...as long as the United States didn't "overreact."

14. (C) Expressing irritation at Caricom's cumbersome decision-making style, Mitchell complained that too much time was wasted by the ceremonial opening and closing of the sessions as each successive host felt compelled to spend time and money on needless pomp and circumstance. He also expressed annoyance at the prolixity of his colleagues, noting that had not each government head not insisted on "getting their own paragraph" into the final declaration, they might have both accomplished more and not have been forced to hold their closing press conference at 2 a.m. in the morning.

CARICOM,S SPECIAL ENVOY AND CALLS FOR AN INVESTIGATION  
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15. (C) Regarding the naming of Caricom's "special envoy" to address the Haiti issue, Mitchell indicated that Caricom had been unable to reach consensus on who this person should be by the end of the inter-sessional and that this would be subject to continued intra-Caricom negotiations. He said that personally hoped that it would be an individual who both had prior diplomatic experience and someone closer to The Bahamas, position on Haiti than that of some eastern Caribbean states. He discounted the prospect of anyone from The Bahamas being selected for this role.

16. (C) Asked to clarify Caricom's call for an investigation into the circumstances of Aristide's resignation, Mitchell sought to downplay its significance. He said that he personally envisioned the "investigation" as equivalent to resolution of a "routine credentials challenge" to a government such as occurs at the UNGA or another committee. If the LaTortue government is seen to be exercising effective control in the country then, thought Mitchell, it ought to be seated in Haiti's chair at the UN without controversy, Mitchell claimed. He explicitly sought to minimize the scope, the impact, and the significance of the Caricom-requested investigation -- but without indicating whether his views reflected a broader Caricom view, those of the Bahamian Cabinet, or his own personal view of an exit strategy out of Caricom's dilemma.

17. (C) Questioned about recognition of the LaTortue government, FM Mitchell reiterated his previous statements that most Caricom members, as does The Bahamas, follow the "Estrada Doctrine" when it comes to recognition and rather than making value or moral judgments about a government, will recognize whomever exercises effective control in Haiti as that country's legitimate government. He assured the Charge that The Bahamas would not break with its long-held policy of dealing with any government in control in Haiti, pointing out that bilateral relations between The Bahamas and Haiti had never been suspended during the transition from Aristide to LaTortue. Foreign Minister Mitchell complained that the press has exaggerated the recognition controversy and that matters were not as bad as they appeared to be. He noted that Haitian Prime Minister LaTortue had called him personally and assured him that press reports on Haiti refusing to permit the return of the Bahamian Ambassador to Haiti were totally untrue. Mitchell also cited repeated phone conversations between LaTortue and Jamaica's Prime Minister P.J. Patterson, who apparently had a close working relationship in the past, as evidence that Caricom and the new Haitian government could work together. He said that he expected the Haitian Ambassador to return to The Bahamas in the near future as well.

Ex-President Jean Aristide in Jamaica  
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18. (C) The Foreign Minister insisted that the United States should not be concerned with, or opposed to, Aristide's presence in the Caribbean. He argued that a perceived "Banishing Policy" has racial and historical overtones in the Caribbean that reminds inhabitants of the region of slavery and past abuse. The Charge inquired on what would happen if Aristide were to meddle with Haitian internal affairs and give his supporters the impression that he is still a player in the future of Haiti. Foreign Minister Mitchell was emphatic that Jamaica will not allow Aristide to play such an intrusive role and would "deal" with Aristide if such a situation were to arise.

COMPREHENSIVE MARITIME AGREEMENT

19. (C) Queried about the status of ratification of the comprehensive maritime agreement (CMA) that has now been negotiated over the last 18 months, FM Mitchell reported that due to the document's significance and complexity it had been decided to prepare a formal briefing to the entire Cabinet. Optimistically, Mitchell thought that this could be completed in two cabinet sessions over a two-week period. Questioned about the need for such a time-consuming review of what is essentially a codification and rationalization of existing agreements, Mitchell again wistfully mused about how the Bahamian cabinet decision-making process might be improved. He related that he had learned as a result of his Caricom attendance that in other Commonwealth countries, debate and intervention on issues in the cabinet is restricted to their ministers whose portfolios are directly impacted by the issue, or ministers that assert fundamental issues of principle. In contrast, Mitchell intimated, in the Christie Cabinet of the Bahamas operates much less efficiently since any minister can intervene and express a view on any issue before the government.

JOINT TASK FORCE MEETING

10. (C) Queried about his preferences for a date for the next session of the Joint Task Force on Illegal Drug Interdiction (JTF), Mitchell expressed agreement for an early summer meeting in late May/early June. He agreed with Charge's suggestion that the JTF would best be held following ratification of the CMA and successful implementation of a major anti-drug round-up that is being planned for the near future so that participants could review both past successes since the last JTF meeting and consider specific goals to be accomplished for the coming year.

COMMENT

11. (C) Foreign Minister Mitchell was his usual business-like self during lunch as he pursued his agenda of downplaying the consequences of a division between Caricom and the United States on Haiti. Underlying many of Mitchell's arguments was the premise that Caricom/The Bahamas as small countries take (and are entitled to take) principled stands while the United States necessarily engages in real politik.

12. (C) Despite a life-long career as a politician in a country where politics is personalized to the extreme, neither kissing babies nor making small talk comes naturally to Fred Mitchell. He prefers to deal with agendas expeditiously and then engage in philosophical discussions or reviews of international relations drawing on his seminars at Harvard's Kennedy School. Holding two time-consuming portfolios (managing the civil service and foreign policy) is also taking its toll on Mitchell's private time. Mitchell told Charge a year ago that he hoped to write a twelve-chapter (one chapter for each month of the year) book combining policy, history, and personal ideology to be published on his fifty-first birthday. Ruefully, he admitted that he hasn't progressed beyond chapter four.

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